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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAQI GOVERNMENT, DECEMBER 15th ELECTION, TRANSPARENCY; BAGHDAD

SUMMARY: The major themes in today's editorials were the political discussions and conflicts regarding parliamentary elections and the Kurdish initiative to contain the political crisis.

Quasi-independent As-Sabah published a front-page editorial entitled "Continuity," in which the author discusses Jalal Al-Talabani's initiative to unify the disparate Iraqi political groups. The Kurdish Al-Ittihad focuses on the same theme in an editorial about the Kurdish initiative to harmonize political disagreements among Iraqi factions. Independent As-Sabah Al-Jadeed discusses the establishment of the forthcoming government and how the Iraqi people look forward to witnessing its achievements in its front-page editorial, "This Morning." Independent Al-Mashriq criticizes the conflict among the disparate political groups and contends that parliamentary seats are the keys to wealth and dominance in "Share the Cake Fairly." END SUMMARY.

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SELECTED COMMENTARIES

1A. "Politicians and Short-Sightedness"

(Ad-Dustoor, independent, published a front-page editorial by editor in chief Bassam Al-Sheikh about Iraqi politicians. The editorial reads in part)

"During their speeches or statements, Iraqi politicians think they are guardians of specific sects or groups. They think that they are authorized to speak on behalf of the people. I believe this represents the short-sightedness from which most of those politicians suffer. Iraqis deal with a special kind of politician who devastated the country. Today, those politicians discriminate against people and favor others without having any national principles. They only speak about national principles in their bombastic slogans. Those politicians who call for power-sharing will fail in the end. The Iraqi people will be able to distinguish between those politicians, and then they will know how to restore their wounded country from the hands of occupiers and their followers."

1B. "Why Aggravation?"

(Al-Fourat, independent, anti-coalition, published a front-page editorial by editor in chief Shakir Al-Jibouri about the political discussions among Iraqi factions. The editorial reads in part)

"Iraqis held their breath yesterday after some rest from the bombs that rocked Baghdad. We don't know why these bombings occurred when they did, and we don't know who benefits from this violence, as the Iraqi people are still the only victims. Current political discussions seek to achieve a unified understanding to save the country from the current crisis. For this reason, we deny and reject the principle of aggravation. All parts must consider the unity of the country and end extremism and violence. Our people do not need lessons in patriotism and sacrifice, but they want a positive environment to develop fraternity. Our problems and crises will be solved by our unity."

1C. "People Defend Their Votes"

(Al-Bayyan, affiliated with the Islamic Ad-Dawa Party published a front-page unattributed editorial about the demonstrations in Iraqi cities after the announcement of preliminary election results. The editorial reads in part)

"The demonstrations that began in Baghdad and other provinces after the announcement of preliminary election results show that the people have political awareness. The people confirmed during their rallies that they refuse to redo the election, as this would belittle the people's

willpower and choice. This also would reduce the UIA's large success in the election. Moreover, these demonstrations have called for reelecting Ibrahim Al-Ja'fari as prime minister in the forthcoming period. It indicates that Al-Ja'fari has widespread popularity from the people because his government has achieved many accomplishments in spite of its young age. Finally, these demonstrations represent a democratic phenomenon that shows Iraqi people have the right to defend their determination."

D. "A Mistake That Can Be Contained"
(Dar As-Salam, affiliated with Iraqi Islamic Party, published a front-page unattributed editorial about the political conflicts that arose after the announcement of preliminary election results. The editorial reads in part)

"Iraq today is experiencing a sensitive political stage. Iraq is about to reach the most dangerous political interchange since its occupation in April 2003. Day after day, we believe that the American occupation of Iraq has made mistakes, starting from the Governing Council to the last parliamentary election. However, it is important for all influential political groups in Iraq to know how to get over the current political crisis. Those who think that they have wide popularity among Iraqis must understand that it is important to adopt honest methods in any political practice. In every crisis, the IIP suggests suitable solutions for crises. This time, the party thinks this crisis can be solved by re-holding the elections, since this election was proven to be rigged. Finally, we say that this crisis can be contained by adopting the wisdom and sense to establish a united country."

E. "Because Iraq Is Worthy"
(Al-I'ttisam, affiliated with General Conference for Ahl Al-Iraq, led by Adnan Al-Dulaimi, published a front-page unattributed editorial about the political process. The editorial reads in part)

"The patriotic and honest powers that oppose the occupation have participated in the political process in spite of all difficulties, threats, and conspiracies. The honest powers in the Iraqi Harmony List knew that Iraq's political environment was not healthy. Additionally, the participation of those who have been marginalized from the political process will not be easy because there are many groups that try to control the political process. Those groups do not want to give in to the real builders of the state and those who have clean hands, histories, and consciences. This group of people will be able to mend what was destroyed in the country and they will put out the flames of the occupation and its followers. Today, we face an enormous national battle to fix the problems, remove the chaos, and build our civilization. Because Iraq is worthy, we have to win this battle."

KHALILZAD